

IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 10, line 3, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--Although in the illustrated embodiment each DGRE 310 is connected to a single SS7 signaling point, the present invention is not limited to such an embodiment. For example, in an alternative embodiment of the present invention, each DGRE 310 may be associated with more than one SS7 network element. In addition, DGREs 310 may be connected to network elements other than those illustrated in Figure 3, such as softswitches soft switches and media gateway controllers.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 18, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--Figures 4(A) and 4(B) respectively illustrate examples of an IPv6 header and a flow label field of the IPv6 header. In Figure 4(A), IPv6 header **400** includes version field **402** indicates the IP version. Flow label field **404** contains parameters used by routers to provide quality of service. Payload length field **406** specifies the length of the IPv6 payload. Next header field **408** specifies the type of any extension headers that follow the base header. Extension headers are optional in IPv6 and are not of importance to explaining the present invention. Hop limit field **410** provides a strict bound on the maximum number of hops a datagram can make before being discarded. Source address field **412** and destination field **414** each contain 128-bit IP addresses, thus greatly increasing the IP address [[face]] space over conventional IPv4.--

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 14, line 21, with the following rewritten paragraph:

--Figure 6(A) illustrates an example of an IP packet including an MPLS header.

In the illustrated example, IP packet 600 includes an IP header 602, an MPLS header 604, a TCP header 606, and a payload 608. For an SS7 call signaling message routed between distributed gateway routing elements, IP header 602 may contain the IP address of one of the distributed gateway routing elements. MPLS header 604 may contain a service class identifier that identifies a class of service to be given to IP packet 600. For SS7 call signaling messages, the class of service is preferably a high class of service that has low delay and high reliability. TCP header 606 contains transport layer information such as sequence numbers for a TCP string stream that may be established between distributed gateway routing elements. Finally, payload field 608 contains some or all of the SS7 call signaling packet. Thus, a variety of methods may be used to guarantee quality of service for call signaling packets routed between distributed gateway routing elements.--